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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 000437

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SUBJECT: UNAMID FORCE COMMANDER'S VISION OF DEPLOYMENT

REF: KHARTOUM 434

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**¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY.** A March 24 conversation with UNAMID Force Commander (FC) Martin Luther Agwai revealed the depth of the chasm between the vision on the ground in El Fasher and at UN Headquarters in New York of UNAMID's short-term deployment plan. Like other UNAMID officials (reftel), the FC cited logistics as the greatest impediment to expedited deployment. However, his deployment plan takes into account not only operational and military realities but political ramifications as well, particularly with regard to the Egyptian and Ethiopian battalions. Twice in the conversation the FC stated that he was preparing to tell the UN "no" on certain deployment elements it was proposing. END SUMMARY.

"IF I HAD MY WAY . . ."

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**¶12. (SBU)** On March 24, his first full day back at UNAMID El Fasher Headquarters after conferences in Kigali, FC Agwai articulated for FieldOff his plan for short-term UNAMID deployment. Reftel speculated there might be a disconnect between UNAMID leadership's vision of UNAMID deployment and the FC's own vision, but it was clear in the course of conversation that there is a gap only between El Fasher (UNAMID HQ) and UN HQ in New York thinking. As his advisers had indicated, the FC highlighted as his top priorities getting the Egyptian battalion into Sector North and the Ethiopian battalion into Sector West to ensure a UNAMID presence in what he called "areas of need." He was keen to move the Rwandans into Korma and into Sector South as four Nigerian battalions there begin to rotate in April/May, in order to have a better "mixture" of troop contributor nationalities in an area that has traditionally been staffed by Nigerians.

**¶13. (SBU)** However, the FC acknowledged that an influx of new battalions (Egypt and Ethiopia included) would cause undue logistical strain on the mission, a strain which, in his assessment, constituted the most difficult part of deploying UNAMID quickly. "If I had my way," the FC mused, "I would expand existing camps and support the ten existing battalions, which would be a better use of resources and would result in better synergy for the mission than outfitting new ones." He viewed an increase in capabilities and equipment for the one Senegalese, four Nigerian and four Rwandan battalions as a more effective way to bolster UNAMID's image and credibility. He worried in particular about the demand that would be put on UNAMID slender air assets when the four Nigerian battalions would rotate out in April/May, while the new Egyptian and Ethiopian battalions would rotate in at the same time.

"I WILL TELL THE UN NO"

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¶4. (SBU) Turning to the topic of Egyptian and Ethiopian deployments, the FC said the Egyptian Government had still not formally agreed to re-locate its pledged battalion from Sector South to Sector North. The FC is keen to split battalions regionally so as to prevent strain on re-supply lines, but he is not optimistic that the Egyptians share this view. Following extensive meetings with the Egyptian Ministry of Defense in Cairo, the FC could get only conditions rather than commitments on Egypt's plans for its battalion. According to the FC, whether Egypt will deploy is a big "if," dependent upon assurances that the battalion would not be split into two locations (the FC had wanted to divide it between Umm Kadada and Shangil Tobayi so as to move an existing Rwandan battalion from Shangil Tobayi to Korma). Its deployment is also contingent upon an assurance that an Egyptian engineering company would go with it to Umm Kadada. The FC admitted that some of his advisors told him to strike a deal with Egypt on the change of venue for its incoming battalion before approaching Ethiopia with the same request for its own incoming troops (the FC wants to move the Ethiopians from El Fasher to the very sensitive and unstable Kulbus/Silea area, where a UNAMID presence is desperately needed). However, the FC intended to take advantage of a March 24 visit to El Fasher by an Ethiopian reconnaissance team, led by a Major General, to present his plan.

¶5. (SBU) The FC mentioned the offers from both Egypt and Ethiopia of one additional battalion each. He and his staff were skeptical about the Egyptian offer, as Egyptian troops are not viewed favorably, either by the mission leadership or by the local populations [NOTE: Egyptians, considered pro-Khartoum "Arabs" by many Darfur locals, are poorly received, if received at all, in many locations by rebels and IDPs. Despite his desire to send a battalion as soon as possible to the town of Korma, the FC is ready to wait to send the Rwandans there instead of the Egyptians, as the rebels in the area object to "Arab" peacekeepers. Further, the FC said the main reason why Egypt would consider deploying to Umm Kadada vice Shangil Tobayi was because of the presence of an IDP camp in the latter, where its peacekeepers would not get a good

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reception. END NOTE].

¶6. (SBU) On the Ethiopian offer, the FC said that he had heard nothing formal in this regard but that if he did, he would tell the UN no. "What the UN does not understand," he explained, "is that to absorb a new battalion, we will have to drop a battalion off the list. Otherwise, we will be raising the troop ceiling beyond our mandated strength." He speculated that the additional Egyptian and Ethiopian battalions, if absorbed, would come in at the likely expense of the Thai and Nepalese battalions, a "strategy" to which he strenuously objected, on the basis that the "predominantly" African character of UNAMID did not mean an "entirely" African character.

COMMENT

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¶7. (SBU) As reported reftel, the divide appears to be deepening between UNAMID on the ground and UN HQ with regard to troop deployment. It seems that New York may be making promises it cannot keep, as seen in Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's reported pledge to President Bashir that UNAMID would accept additional Egyptian and Ethiopian battalions. This instance could merit intervention with the SYG to clarify what he did or did not say on this matter and to determine if the SYG is trying to go it alone on Darfur decisions. Despite the political pressures the UN is facing regarding Darfur deployment, for the UNAMID mission to be a success there needs to be better coordination and consultation with the Force Commander in El Fasher and DPKO.

¶8. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

FERNANDEZ